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THE EXCAVATIONS IN PALESTINE

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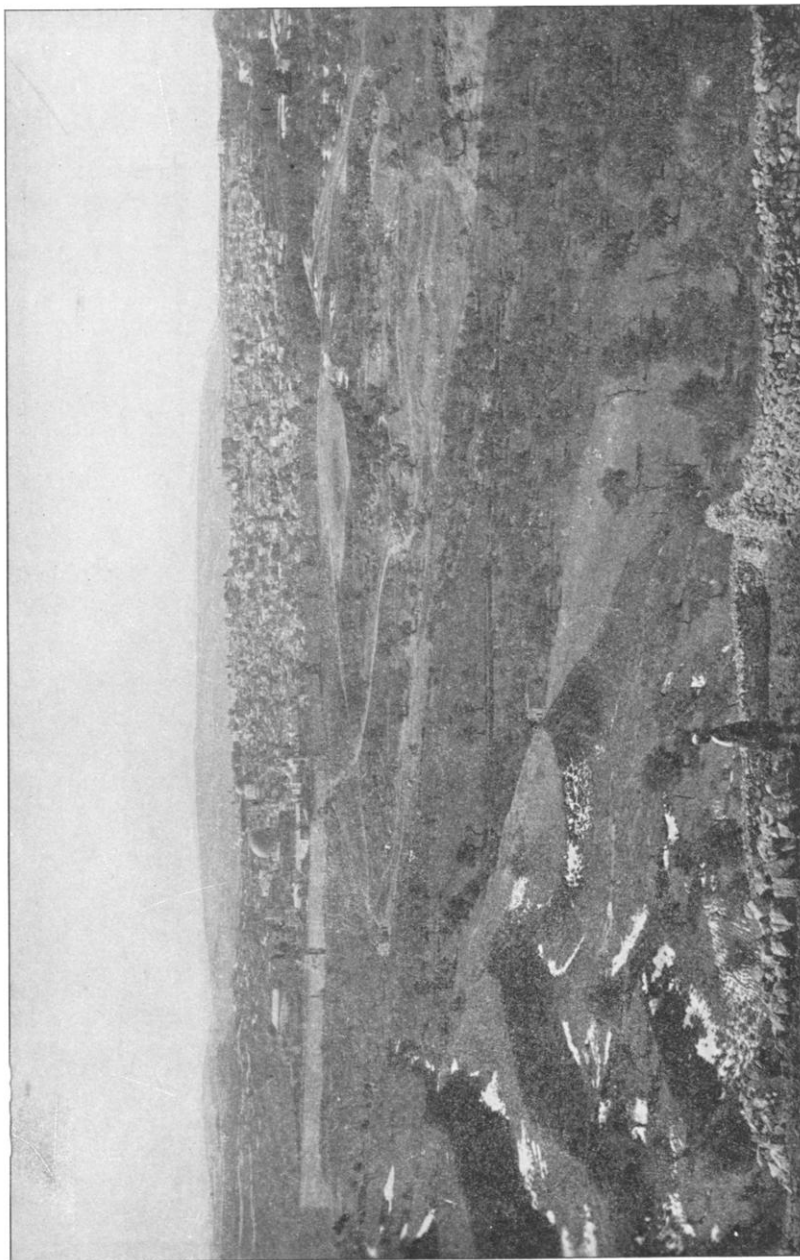
I

In summarizing the results of the excavations conducted in Palestine during the last twenty years¹ it has been thought best to discuss (1) the early history of Palestine in the light of these excavations; and (2) the origins of the religion of Israel in the same light.

I. THE EARLY HISTORY OF PALESTINE IN THE LIGHT OF THE EXCAVATIONS

Before taking up the history of Palestine as learned from the excavations, it will be well to call attention to the fact that this country is but a part of what we know today as Syria. Modern Syria extends from the Taurus Mountains on the north to the peninsula of Sinai on the south, and may roughly be divided into four parts. Northern Syria extends from the Bay of Alexandretta to the Eleutheros River, modern Nahr el-Kebîr. The second part, including the Phoeni-

¹ In 1890, Professor Petrie spent six weeks in excavation at Tell el-Hesi, the biblical Lachish. Dr. Bliss continued this work until January, 1893. Cf. Bliss, *A Mound of Many Cities*. During the years 1898-1900, Dr. Bliss and Mr. Macalister conducted excavations at Tell Zakariya (perhaps the ancient Azekah, or Socoh), Tell es-Sâfi (probably Gath), Tell ej-Judeideh (never identified with any ancient site), and Tell Sandahannah (perhaps Mareshah). (Bliss and Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine*.) Mr. Macalister was engaged in excavating at Abu-Shûshe, the biblical Gezer, from 1902-1905 and from 1907-1909. Provisional reports of these excavations have been published by Mr. Macalister in *Bible Side-Lights from the Mound of Gezer* and in the *Quarterly Statements of the Palestine Exploration Fund*. Professor Sellin conducted excavations at Taanach from March, 1902, to March, 1903, and again in 1904, (Sellin, *Tell Ta'annek* and *Eine Nachlese auf dem Tell Ta'annek*). Dr. Schumacher was engaged in excavating Tell el-Mutesellim, biblical Megiddo, from 1903 to 1905. (Schumacher and Steuernagel, *Tell el-Mutesellim*, Part I [Part II has not yet appeared].) In 1907, Professor Sellin began excavations at the site of ancient Jericho, and work was again in progress during the last winter (1909). A preliminary report appeared in *Mittheilungen und Nachrichten des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, 1907. Harvard University began excavations at Samaria (modern Sebastiyeh) in April of 1908, and resumed work last summer (1909). A preliminary report appears in the *Harvard Theological Review*, January, 1909.



Photograph by Bonfils

JERUSALEM FROM MOUNT SCOPUS

cian coast on the west, and Coele-Syria and the region about Damascus on the east, extends as far south as Tyre. Here the third part begins, namely, Palestine proper, including the Philistine coast and extending as far south as the southeast corner of the Mediterranean. The last part includes the desert et-Tih, the Araba, and the mountains of Petra.² We shall see that these were approximately the political divisions of this region from earliest times.

It may also make for clearness if we call attention in advance to a few general facts in the history of the ancient Orient, in which Palestine and Israel played but a very small part. Arabia seems to have been the original home of the Semites, and from here they went forth in successive waves of migration to the more fertile regions round about. The first of these migrations of which we have any knowledge occurred in prehistoric times, took the Semites into Egypt, and "stamped its essential character unmistakably upon the language of the African people there."³ The next wave must have moved forth from Arabia in the centuries following 3000 B. C. This wave took the Babylonians of the Dynasty of Sargon of Akkad, *ca.* 2500 B. C., into the Euphrates Valley, and perhaps the founders of the Phoenician coast cities to the Mediterranean. The third wave brought the First, or Hammurabi, Dynasty into Babylonia and the Canaanites into Canaan. This occurred in the centuries immediately preceding 2000 B. C. The fourth wave took the Aramaeans into Syria and Mesopotamia, and their kindred tribes, the Hebrews, Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites into Palestine, *ca.* 1500 B. C., while the last wave from Arabia began to move forth in the centuries immediately before the Christian era, and culminated in the great conquests of Islam.⁴ Syria and Palestine lay between the two great civilizations on the Nile and the Euphrates, and must have been influenced by both. But there are two other influences which have received less attention in the past than they deserved, namely, the influence of the Hittite peoples of Asia Minor and that of the "Mediterranean peoples." The former played an important part in oriental history for a thousand years, from *ca.* 2000 B. C. onward, while the influence of the latter began

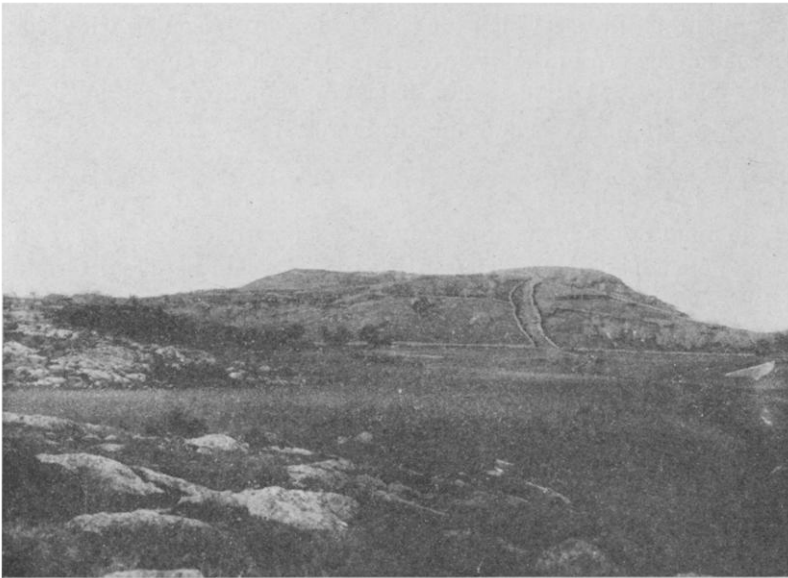
² Baedeker, *Syria and Palestine*, 1906, p. xlviii.

³ Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 29.

⁴ Cf. Winckler, *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*, 3d ed., pp. 11 f.

even before the Israelites entered Palestine and culminated in the Hellenistic period of their history. We may now turn to the excavations in Palestine.

The excavations conducted by Mr. Macalister at Abu-Shûshe, the biblical Gezer, have thrown considerable light upon the prehistoric inhabitants of Palestine. The presence of paleolithic and neolithic man in Palestine had been evident from the dolmens and other megalithic remains, the rock-cuttings and cup-holes, the



TELL ES-SÂFI (GATH) FROM THE EAST

worked flints found scattered over the whole country, and most of all, from the enormous complexes of bell-chambers and other subterranean caverns in the neighborhood of Beit-Jibrîn.⁵

At Gezer there was a settlement of neolithic cave-dwellers which spread over a considerable area and was surrounded by a massive earth rampart strengthened by a stone wall two feet thick. In one of the caves the higher portion was reserved for the human occupants,

⁵ Cf. Bliss and Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine*, pp. 188 f.; Blankenhorn, "Ueber die Steinzeit und die Feuersteinartefakte in Syrien-Palästina," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, XXXVII, 447 f.; Vincent, *Canaan*, pp. 373 f.

while a depressed, probably excavated, portion to the side was occupied by their cattle and flocks,⁶ whose pictures were rudely carved upon the walls.⁷ Two small cisterns were also found in this cave, while in another there was discovered a large stone rolled over the entrance to a second cave below, from which in turn passages led off to other rooms on the side.⁸ Still another cave, thirty feet long by twenty-four wide, was used as a burial cave. The remains of calcined bones and a blackened chimney led Mr. Macalister to conclude that these cave-dwellers, whom he regards as non-Semitic,⁹ cremated their dead and left the charred remains, together with food-vessels for the use of the departed, in this cave. The pottery found in these caves was fashioned by hand and sometimes decorated with red and white lines. The implements in use were made of flint and bone.

Neither at Tell el-Hesi nor at Taanach¹⁰ did the excavations reveal any definite traces of neolithic cave-dwellers, while at Tell el-Mutesellim not enough of the surface of the rock was laid bare to determine whether or not they had a settlement there. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that primitive man—whether Semitic or not cannot be determined—occupied the hill of Mutesellim. The lowest stratum contains a mixture of dark earth, bones, small flint knives, some potsherds and ashes;¹¹ but the fact that no burials were found leaves undetermined the question of the relation of these people to the cave-dwellers at Gezer as well as to the Semites of the strata above. It would seem, however, as if a considerable period of

⁶ Of domestic animals certainly known to these people were the sheep, the cow, the pig, and the goat. Cf. Driver, *Modern Research*, pp. 49 f., where the reports of Mr. Macalister are summarized.

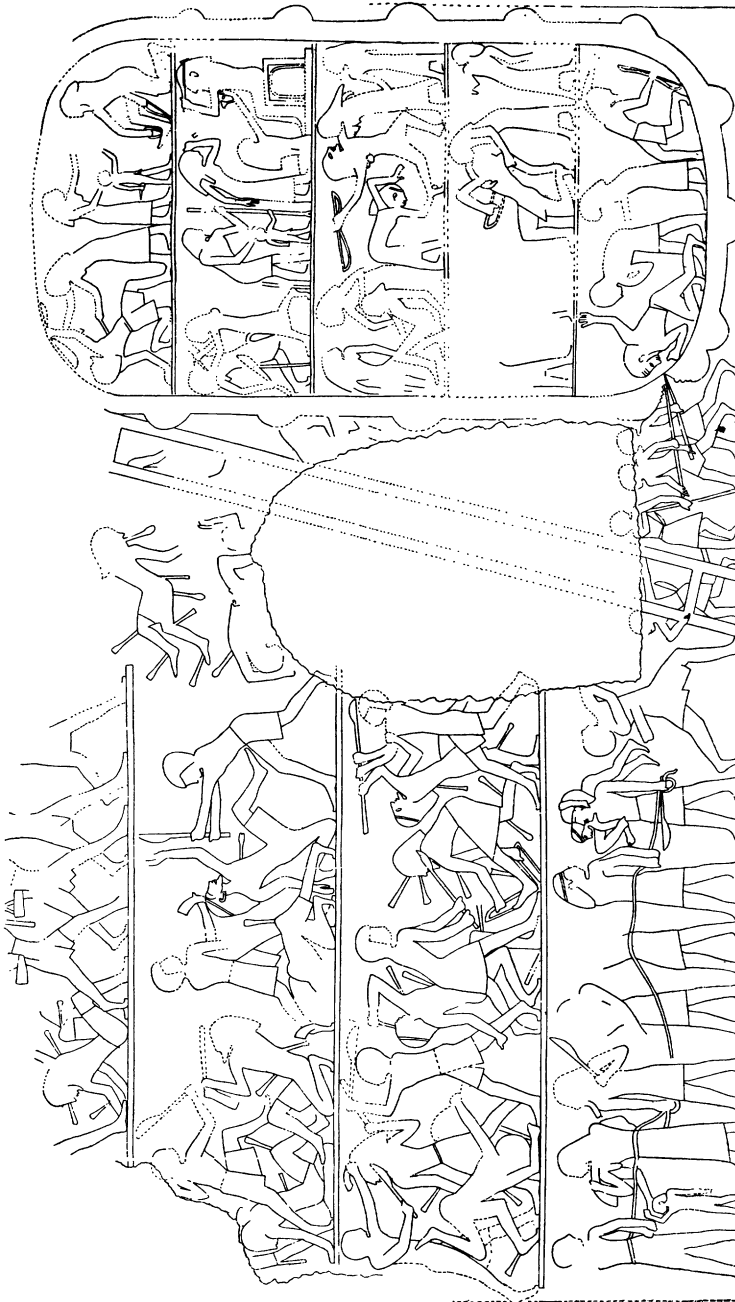
⁷ "These drawings, whatever their origin, are beyond all question the oldest works of art that Palestine has yet produced."—Mr. Macalister, *Quarterly Statement*, 1908, p. 217. The date assigned by Mr. Macalister to these oldest cave-settlements is *ca.* 3500–3200 B. C.

⁸ *Quarterly Statement*, 1908, p. 213.

⁹ This view is based upon the measurements of skulls and bones which show that the cave-dwellers were of a smaller race than their successors, the Semites, and upon the fact that they cremated their dead, a custom particularly abhorrent to Semites. (*Quarterly Statement*, 1904, p. 108, and following Reports.)

¹⁰ At Taanach caves were found, but they were empty.

¹¹ *Tell el-Mutesellim*, p. 11.



From Petrie, *Deir el-Bachra*, Pl. IV

EGYPTIANS OF THE FIFTH DYNASTY ATTACKING A SEMITIC CITY

time intervened between the destruction of this earliest settlement and the one succeeding it.

According to Mr. Macalister¹² there are two strata between the earliest Troglodyte caves at Gezer and the inner wall of the city, erected *ca.* 2500 B. C. Both of these strata he regards as belonging to the period of the first Semites. At Taanach¹³ and Tell el-Mutesellim¹⁴ the first permanent settlements with walls of stone and brick as well as buildings of these more permanent materials cannot be placed much before 2000 B. C., that is, not before the Canaanites entered Palestine.

It will be well to turn for a moment to the Egyptian and Babylonian records to see what light they may throw upon the earliest history of Palestine. Both the Palermo Stone and the inscriptions of the Wadi Maghara in the peninsula of Sinai bear witness that already in the First Dynasty, beginning *ca.* 3400 B. C., the Egyptians, who were exploiting the copper mines in Sinai, came in contact with tribes of Beduin,¹⁵ while as early as the Third Dynasty (2980–2900 B. C.) the Egyptians imported cedar wood from the Lebanons¹⁶ and Sahure of the Fifth Dynasty brought back Phoenician captives, whose pictures, on a relief from his pyramid-temple at Abusir, are the oldest pictures of Semitic Syrians which have come down to us.¹⁷

The inscriptions discussed thus far contain no references to conquest of, or intercourse with, the people of Palestine proper, but that Egypt was in touch with this country as well as with Sinai to the south and Phoenicia to the north, is evident from the campaigns of Uni, the general of Pepi I, 2590–2570 B. C., of the Fifth Dynasty. The Asiatic “Sand-dwellers” had become aggressive, and Uni was commissioned to gather an army and march against them. Having done so, he informs us that “this army returned in safety, (after) it had hacked up the land of the Sand-dwellers; this army returned in safety, (after) it had destroyed the land of the Sand-dwellers; this

¹² *Quarterly Statement*, 1908, p. 213.

¹³ *Tell Ta'anneh*, p. 101.

¹⁴ *Tell el-Mutesellim*, I, 15.

¹⁵ Cf. Breasted, *A History of Egypt*, pp. 47 f., and Fig. 28.

¹⁶ Breasted, *Ancient Records*, I, 66 n. a.

¹⁷ Breasted, *A History of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 114. The date is *ca.* 2750 B. C.

army returned in safety, (after) it had overthrown its strongholds; this army returned in safety, (after) it had cut down its figs and its vines; this army returned in safety, (after) it had thrown fire in all its [grain-fields];¹⁸ this army returned in safety, (after) it had slain its troops therein, in many ten-thousands," etc.¹⁹ The Sand-dwellers revolted again and again, and Uni was compelled to make five campaigns against them. "When it was said that there were revolvers because of a matter among these barbarians in the land of the Gazelle-nose, I crossed over in troop-ships with these troops, and I voyaged to the back of the height of the ridge on the north of the Sand-dwellers. When this army had been [brought] in the highway, I came and smote them all and every revoler among them was slain."²⁰ Professor Breasted has suggested in a conversation with the writer, that the "Gazelle-nose" is Mount Carmel, and Uni's campaign, in which the troops were transported north of the "ridge," thus extended farther north²¹ than was formerly supposed. Uni speaks of overthrowing the strongholds of these Sand-dwellers. An illustration of such a scene is found on the wall of the tomb-chamber of Anta,²² from about the middle of the Fifth Dynasty. The Egyptians are attacking a walled town occupied by Semites, perhaps located somewhere in Palestine.

From a Babylonian chronicle of late date,²³ but supported by contemporary evidence,²⁴ we learn that Sargon of Akkad, *ca.* 2500 B. C., conducted military operations in the "West" and probably exercised

¹⁸ This suggestion was made to me by Professor Breasted in a conversation.

¹⁹ Breasted, *Ancient Records*, I, § 313.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, § 315.

²¹ See also Breasted, *History of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 121.

²² See illustration (p. 25), from Petrie, *Deshasheh*, Pl. IV.

²³ King, *Chronicles concerning Early Babylonian Kings*, I, 27 f. The passage in question reads, "The Sea in the *East* he (Sargon) crossed, and in the eleventh year the country of the West in its full extent his hand subdued. He united them under one control; he set up his images in the West; their booty he brought over at (his) word." We shall see that an Omen text used by Winckler to prove that Sargon's conquests extended to the islands of the Mediterranean was based upon the same original as this chronicle.

²⁴ A date on a contemporary document reads, "In the year in which Shargani-Sharri conquered Amurru in Basar." Thureau-Dangin, *die sumerischen und akkadischen Königsinschriften*, p. 224 b.

some sort of control as far west as the Mediterranean. A few hundred years later Gudea had cedars brought from the Amanus mountains, as well as other building material from Amurru, for use in the construction of his temples.²⁵ The name Amurru, usually translated as "West" or "Westland" refers to the country directly back of the Phoenician coast, including the Lebanons on the west and extending eastward past Damascus. There is no evidence for extending Amurru over the whole of Syria and Palestine, and it is therefore



ANCIENT JERICO AND THE MOUNT OF THE TEMPTATION
(The Mound of Jericho lies at the center of the base of the hill to the left)

pure assumption on the part of Winckler and the rest of the pan-Babylonians, when they speak of the conquests of Sargon of Akkad as extending over the whole of Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine, and the islands of the Mediterranean, even, perhaps, the north coast of Africa.²⁶

²⁵ Thureau-Dangin, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²⁶ The writer of the Omen-tablet, already referred to, misread his original, and had Sargon cross the sea of the *West* instead of the sea of the *East*. In spite of this error, it still remains "selbstverständlich" to Winckler that the Babylonian civilization "must have" spread its influence to the farthest corners of the "West," as interpreted by him;

As indicated above, the Phoenician coast cities may have been founded by the Semites of the first migration of historical times.²⁷ It is evident from the later history of the country that it was here in Syria, north of Palestine proper, that the first states of Syria-Palestine were formed; a fact which is only natural in view of the harbors of this coast. On the other hand, the coast of Palestine has no harbors, and we may be sure that this country did not develop as early nor as rapidly as the region to the north. The campaigns of Uni indicate, however, the possibility of Egyptian control in Palestine as early as 2500 B. C.

The historical events of the next period, that is, from the beginning of the Canaanite settlements to the so-called Amarna period, *ca.* 1400 B. C., may be sketched very briefly. It has been shown by a study of the personal names of this period, as well as by other evidence, that the First Dynasty of Babylon was west-Semitic. Hammurabi subdued Amurru, but there is no evidence that his conquests extended into Palestine. This dynasty came to an end about 1750 B. C. We now know that the Hittites invaded Babylonia during the reign of Samsu-ditana, the last king of the First Dynasty, and that this was the indirect cause of the fall of the dynasty. Sesostriis III,²⁸ 1887–

in fact, Babylonian influence must have encircled the globe. Cf. his *Die babylonische Geisteskultur*, pp. 14 f., and Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des alten Orients*, cap. 14. The discussion of the extent of Amurru belongs to Babylonian history, but it is of importance to bear in mind that down to the Assyrian period the name is always limited to the district indicated above, whenever our texts are definite enough for us to draw any conclusions on the point. In Sennacherib's inscriptions Amurru as well as Hatti, that is, the land of the Hittites, are general terms used to designate the countries included in what we know today as Syria. Cf. above, p. 1.

²⁷ It is not to be supposed that the Semites of an earlier migration may not have reached the coast, nor that the Canaanites were the first Semites who came into Palestine. All that we can say from the evidence of the excavations, is that it was under the Canaanites that Palestine made its first great step forward. We must also bear in mind that there has always been a strip of country of varying width between the actual desert and the permanently inhabited districts in which the transition from a nomadic to an agricultural life was going on. The story of Sinuhe's adventures gives us a picture of such a transitional stage for the period *ca.* 2000–1900 B. C., and, as we now know, for the region back of Byblos. Cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, I, §§ 486 f., and Alan H. Gardiner, *Eine neue Handschrift des Sinuhegedichtes*, pp. 7 f.

²⁸ To this period belongs the visit of the Semitic tribesmen led by Absha, depicted in the tomb of Menat-Khufu at Benihasan, Breasted, *History of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 158.

1849 B. C., had invaded Syria and Palestine before this time, and shortly thereafter the Hyksos consolidated in Syria, probably at Kadesh²⁹, and gained complete control of Egypt and naturally of the intervening district of Palestine. The Cassites, a foreign people from the mountains northeast of Babylonia, were now in control of the Euphrates Valley. The Hyksos dominion of Egypt came to an end by 1580 B. C., and as soon as the Eighteenth Dynasty had reorganized Egypt, we find the Pharaohs in control of Palestine and Syria,³⁰ and the whole country organized with Egyptian officials in charge.

When we turn to the results of the excavations in Palestine we find, as we should expect, traces of Egyptian influence everywhere. "The style of burial is thoroughly Egyptian, save that the bodies are not embalmed. The scarabs found in these caves³¹ are in sufficient abundance to fix the date of the interments to the period of the Twelfth Egyptian Dynasty. There seems thus to have been at the time of this dynasty a settled Egyptian population in South Palestine, about the coast-road to Syria, keeping up, to judge from the style of burial at Gezer, and from two funerary inscriptions found there, Egyptian customs."³² At Mutesellim a lucky chance has preserved for us a large vaulted tomb-chamber untouched by later grave-robbers. Here were found the bodies of five persons in the positions in which they had originally been placed. A large number of scarabs, some of them in gold settings, as well as other ornaments in bronze and stone, show that we have to do with the tomb of a family of importance, perhaps that of the king of Megiddo. Some forty food-vessels were found along the walls of the chamber, and "at the head and feet of the dead, as well as between them, were found a large number of camel's teeth, bowls and plates, flasks and jugs, together with amphoras containing the remnants of the food which had been placed therein for the dead."³³ The scarabs point to the twentieth century B. C.

²⁹ Breasted, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

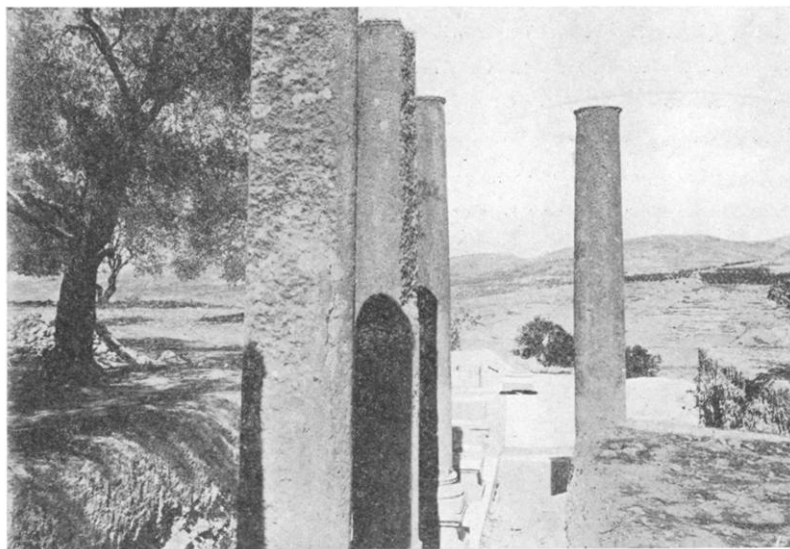
³⁰ This was the result of the campaigns of Thutmose I and Thutmose III, the crowning event being the overthrow of Kadesh on the Orontes.

³¹ Used originally as dwellings by the Troglodytes, but turned into cemeteries by their Semitic successors.

³² Driver, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³³ *Mutesellim*, p. 15.

Scarabs found at Gezer and elsewhere show that the intercourse between Egypt and Palestine did not cease even during the Hyksos period. It was before Megiddo, that is, Tell el-Mutesellim, that Thutmose III met and routed the army of the king of Kadesh and his allies, who had taken possession of this fortress. The booty taken on the field of battle and from the captured city was enormous.³⁴ While Thutmose does not mention taking Taanach, it is probable that a detachment of his troops did so at the time Megiddo was taken.³⁵



COLUMNS OF A TEMPLE, SUPPOSED TO BE HERODIAN, ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE HILL OF SAMARIA

A scarab dating from this period was found in the ruins of the West Tower of the city. The excavations have clearly shown the relative importance of these two places. Megiddo was surrounded by enormous walls of brick and stone and contained large complexes of stone buildings, while at Taanach, as Sellin remarks, the house

³⁴ Breasted, *Ancient Records*, II, §§ 429 f.

³⁵ There were two roads into Esdraelon open to Thutmose, one of which would have brought him out at Taanach. The other, which he chose, brought him out north of Megiddo. The left wing of the army of the Asiatics was in Taanach (*Ancient Records* II, §§ 426 f.).

of the sheik or an effendi stood out in strong contrast to the mud-huts of the other inhabitants; in other words, it was a typical fellahin-village. It is evident from the excavations as well as from the enormous revenue the Pharaohs could collect from Palestine that the population must have reached a high stage of civilization and have been exceedingly prosperous. This fact is also brought out by the Old Testament references to the pre-Israelite inhabitants of the land.³⁶

The period we have just discussed is the period of the patriarchs of the Old Testament stories, but since there is nothing in the results of the excavations which lends support to the attempt of such men as Jeremias to prove the existence of Abraham, the "Babylonian," "Canaanite" and "Hebrew," or to regard the Old Testament accounts as "idealized history," whatever that may mean, we may still calmly hold to the critical conclusion which sees in the patriarchs the eponymous heroes of later Israel.³⁷

³⁶ Cf. Jos. 7: 21.

³⁷ The *facts* cited by Jeremias, Winckler, and the rest of the pan-Babylonians are well-known facts of Babylonian and Egyptian history. It is the interpretation of these facts "in the light of the ancient Orient" that cannot be accepted. Space will not permit an adequate discussion of this subject, but we may call attention to the main premises of their argument: (1) The Babylonian "Weltanschauung," i. e., the theory that everything on earth is but a reflection of the movements of the heavenly bodies, was completely worked out before our written documents begin, already in prehistoric times. (2) This "system" permeated the whole of Babylonia, Elam, Arabia, Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, and even Egypt from earliest times. Both these premises are *assumptions*. That the Babylonians did develop a "Weltanschauung" such as Winckler has worked out will be admitted by anyone acquainted with Babylonian religion and history; but they developed it in *the course of their history, and it reached its full development only after the fall of the neo-Babylonian Empire*. Jeremias lays great stress on the fact that he has shown that the *background* of the accounts of the patriarchal stories is historical, but here, too, it would be easy to point out fatal errors in his argument. For instance, he holds that the marriage customs of the patriarchs conform exactly to the Code of Hammurabi, but that such customs did not exist in later Israel. One has only to ask, Where is the proof? How about the harems of the later kings?

[To be continued]